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SUBJECT: H1N1 UPDATE: GERMANY PASSES 15,000 CASES

REF: A) Berlin 1046, B) Berlin 1039 and previous.

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: The number of confirmed H1N1 infections in Germany has passed the 15,000 mark. On August 27, 319 new cases were reported, bringing the total to 15,259. German health authorities expect a second massive wave of infections in winter. END SUMMARY

¶2. (U) At its August 27 press briefing, the National Reference Center for Influenza at the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) confirmed a total of 319 new (laboratory and non-laboratory) H1N1 cases in Germany, increasing the total number of H1N1 cases to 15,259. New cases were distributed among the federal states as follows: North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) (74), Baden-Wuerttemberg (114), Bavaria (5), Lower-Saxony (26), Hesse (27), Brandenburg (19), Rhineland-Palatinate (25), Hamburg (9), Saxony-Anhalt (4), Thuringia (2), Saxony (6), Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (6), Bremen (1) and Berlin (1).

¶3. (U) According to RKI, 191 of the total 319 new cases are attributed to people returning from travel abroad. New cases include non-laboratory H1N1 cases that exhibited symptoms after being in contact with a laboratory confirmed infected person.

¶4. (U) NRW remains the German state with the highest number of confirmed virus cases with a total of 4,943, followed by Lower-Saxony (2,381) and Baden-Wuerttemberg (2,3105 cases). About 24 percent (3,711) of all confirmed infections in Germany have resulted from domestic transmission.

RKI and PEI expect second massive wave of infections

¶5. (U) Since the beginning of May 2009, Germany has confirmed 15,259 new virus infections. Figures jumped in mid July, mainly attributed to people returning from travel abroad. A month later, the daily rate of infection has slightly decreased. However, RKI does not see this as trend but a "momentary lull."

¶6. (U) At a press briefing on August 27 in Berlin, RKI Vice President Reinhard Burger and President of the Paul Ehrlich

Institute (PEI) in Langen, Johannes Lower, said that they expect a second wave of H1N1 infections in the winter, following the currently steady increase of infections. Burger noted that healthy individuals between 15 and 19 years of age were most affected. Lower confirmed that an H1N1 vaccine had been tested on several hundred people in Germany without serious side effects. (Comment: Two weeks after test immunizations began, reports on side effects have emerged in Hamburg. Several of the 44 volunteers participating in the study reported redness, pain at the puncture and rheumatic pains. The side effects are more serious than those experienced after immunization against seasonal flu, but abate after three days at most. The immunization drug will reportedly come on the market in September. End Comment). According to Lower, the vaccine may be suitable for pregnant women, although it has not yet been tested on this group.

MURPHY